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Tax arrears crackdown worries Johor homeowners

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CRACKDOWNS by several local councils in Johor over unpaid assessment tax have left homeowners worried about the transparency and fairness of the process.

The sudden move caused panic among property owners, including businessman S. Suresh, 44, who said he received a notice from Pasir Gudang City Council (MBPG) regarding his arrears.

"I am aware of the arrears of RM3,922.65 which had accumulated from the second term of 2019.

"After hearing about the measures taken by local councils, I paid extra to cover the arrears as well as this year's assessment rate.

"The house is actually my investment property that I rent out. So, I had overlooked paying the assessment rate," he told *StarMetro*.

He acknowledged that enforcement was necessary but urged local councils to provide better support and flexibility for taxpayers.

"I do not think seizing a person's home is something the council can treat lightly.

"But ultimately it is our responsibility to pay, and it is just a matter of now or later.

"However, local councils should consider offering more time or flexible payment terms based on a homeowner's financial condition," said Suresh, who has two children.

He suggested that the state government and local councils introduce more practical solutions for those struggling to settle arrears.

"Perhaps they can reduce the

Calls for flexibility, clarity as local councils warn errant payees of asset seizure



MBPG enforcement officers putting up notices before sealing off a premises within the council's jurisdiction. — Filepic

assessment rates or allow monthly payment options like how Tenaga Nasional Bhd does.

"Paying in smaller instalments would ease the burden, compared to settling the full amount in one lump sum," he added.

While the crackdown is mainly aimed at those with long overdue payments, even those without any arrears have been affected.

Forklift driver Md Helmee Jumari, who lives in Taman Scientex, said he received a notice of arrears from MBPG despite never having missed a payment.

"What shocked me even more was that the notice had not been delivered to my house but had instead been found by a neighbour who then handed it to me.

"I have always paid my assessment tax on time.

"So I was surprised to be told that I had arrears," the 42-year-old said, adding that he had yet to clarify the issue with MBPG.

When contacted, Johor housing and local government committee chairman Datuk Mohd Jafni Md Shukor confirmed that local councils across the state had begun enforcement operations

earlier this year.

He said these target residential and commercial premises with long overdue payments.

If these arrears are not settled, the council will seize the premises concerned.

"For vacant land, a Form F (warrant) will be issued before the council proceeds to issue a Form H notice to start the auction process.

"If movable assets are present, the council will seize items equivalent in value to the arrears.

"If there are no assets, the property will be auctioned," he said.

Mohd Jafni said proceeds from the auctioned assets would be used to settle the debts.

"If there is a surplus after settling the arrears, the balance will be returned to the property owner.

"The same process applies if a property is auctioned," he said.

He stressed that the enforcement process must comply with Section 148 of the Local Government Act, beginning with the issuance of a Form E notice.

Mohd Jafni also pointed out that almost every local council in Johor still issued physical assessment tax bills, with only Johor Baru City Council having adopted a digital billing system.

"I urge those with assessment rate arrears to make their payments promptly, as the tax revenue is channelled back to the public in the form of infrastructure and services such as roads and waste collection," he added.